PRESS RELEASE
House National Security Committee
Floyd D. Spence, Chairman

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CONTACT: Maureen Cragin
Ryan Vaart
(202) 225-2539

OPENING STATEMENT
CHAIRMAN FLOYD SPENCE
OPEN HEARING ON THREATS
TO U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY INTERESTS

February 12, 1998

We have with us today two distinguished former directors of central intelligence. Both of our witnesses have well deserved reputations in dealing with both defense and intelligence issues and I am glad they both can be with us. Our witnesses today are:

- Dr. John Deutch, who served as President Clinton's Deputy Secretary of Defense and then CIA Director; and
- Ambassador James Woolsey, who served as the President's first CIA director.

Gentlemen, welcome, and thank you for taking time from your busy schedules to be with us today.

Last year, at about this same time, we received testimony from several former CIA Directors, including Ambassador Woolsey. Last year's hearing was very productive and informative. I personally find it helpful to receive a broad overview of the evolving national security environment at the outset of the budget cycle. In this regard, I would like to draw members attention to the fact that, in addition to today's hearing, we are also scheduled for a closed briefing with the intelligence community on February 25.

The question of what threats and challenges the United States faces now and will face in the future, is at the heart of all of our deliberations over the nation's security. I have taken exception with the Administration's Bottom-Up and Quadrennial Defense Reviews most fundamentally for being budget, not threat and strategy driven. So I believe that hearings like this morning's are particularly important for the committee as we begin deliberations over the FY99 defense budget.

Several years ago, in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, there was an optimism among some that the United States no longer faced any significant threats. Some even speculated that the centuries long pattern of conflict between nations had ended and that conflict between peoples and nations would become obsolete.

Less than a decade has passed since the collapse of the Soviet Union, but it is already clear that the world will remain a very dangerous place. Rogue states like North Korea, Iran, and Iraq—no longer restrained by a bipolar superpower balance of power, and increasingly desperate due to their isolation and growing internal economic and political problems—are perhaps more threatening to their neighbors and to U.S. interests than they were during the Cold War.

Ethnic, tribal and religious violence has been a constant feature of the post-Cold War world, and U.S. troops have been sent on more than one occasion to respond to what the Pentagon refers to as "smaller-scale contingencies." One of these, in Bosnia, has become a large-scale commitment that promises to be the central mission for U.S. forces in Europe for years to come. And the list of peacekeeping commitments continues to grow: from the Sinai, to Haiti, to Somalia, to Rwanda.

Nor has the end of the Cold War brought an end to great-power competition. China, economically backward and poorly armed throughout most of the Cold War, is using its robust economy to modernize both its conventional and nuclear forces. China currently has more strategic missiles under development than any other nation. Beijing and Moscow claim to have buried their Cold War hostility and formed a strategic partnership. Unfortunately, this partnership entails significant transfers of advanced weapons and military technology from Russia to China, and Chinese support of Russian political goals, such as opposition to NATO enlargement and to possible U.S. military action against Iraq.

Russia's future is far from certain as well as democracy is not yet firmly established. Indeed, according to a study last year headed by William Webster, former director of the CIA and the FBI, Russia is fast becoming an unstable "kleptocracy," armed with nuclear weapons.

Perhaps most disturbing of all, unprecedented threats are likely to arise from the proliferation of missiles and weapons of mass destruction. I heartily agreed with President Clinton's warning, raised in his "State of the Union Speech," that international "predators will be all the more lethal if weapons of mass destruction fall into their hands." But it is going to take more than international agreements and arms control treaties to address this problem.

Of our potential enemies during the Cold War, only the Soviet Union and China had the capability to strike U.S. cities with missiles. But now, ballistic missile technology is proliferating at a rate faster than ever before. We may well be surprised by a missile threat that can reach the United States from countries like North Korea or Iran sooner than expected, before the United States can deploy cost-effective missile defenses.

We have already been surprised by North Korea's deployment of the No Dong medium-range missile, which poses a serious threat to Japan and our troops stationed there. Last month, CIA Director George Tenet testified in the Senate that, "Iran's success in gaining technology and materials from Russian companies, combined with recent indigenous Iranian advances, means that it could have a medium-range missile much sooner than I assessed last year."

Last year, the CIA concluded that Iran might develop a medium-range missile in "less than 10 years." Now, we are told that Iran might have such a missile in 18 months. While Director Tenet acknowledged the substantial difference between the two estimates, the rapidly evolving nature of this threat indicates just how uncertain and dangerous the post-Cold War world really is.

Therefore, I look to our two distinguished witnesses to enlighten us on the trends, threats and challenges this nation faces in the years ahead.